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GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
SAN JUAN

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SAN JUAN, P. R.

August 20, 1942

Circular Letter No. 47

To: Superintendents of Schools

Re: PLAN OF WORK FOR THE ELEMENTARY URBAN SCHOOLS

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are sending you a copy of the objectives of the elementary urban schools for the school year 1942-43. Please discuss the contents of this circular letter with the urban teachers in your district.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) JOSE M. GALLARDO
Commissioner of Education

Encl.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ELEMENTARY URBAN SCHOOLS FOR
1942-43

Accomplished Last Year

At the beginning of the school year, 1941-42, a committee of teachers and supervisors was appointed by the Commissioner of Education to formulate a new philosophy of education for the schools of Puerto Rico. The committee formulated an orientation designed to bring home and school closer together so that, by relating instruction to everyday life, the school might work for the betterment of the society that supports it.

In order to develop the new philosophy of the elementary urban school, informal experiments in connection with personal and community problems, and also with English projects, were carried on in different parts of the island. The time assigned in the curriculum for elementary science, social science, and health education was dedicated to the study of those personal and community problems which affect and interest the pupils. The time devoted to English was divided into a regular English period and a project period. These experiments were a success because the new work offered the pupils opportunities to satisfy their needs and interests, to use their potentialities in the solution of their own life problems, and to learn English functionally.

The reorganization of the school system was planned with the following setup: a six-year elementary school, a three-year junior high school, and a three-year senior high school. In the new elementary school, all subjects except English and English Projects will be taught in Spanish. English will be taught as a subject, and an extra period will be assigned for what will be known as English projects, to be taught in grades three through six in the elementary urban school and four through six in the rural school. English projects will give the child a chance to acquire English through use.

Objectives for the Year 1942-43

The supervisory staff of the elementary urban school will direct all efforts towards the accomplishment of the following aims:

1. To help teachers and pupils in finding solutions for the urgent problems which affect the lives of the pupils and impair the progress of the community.
2. To offer guidance to principals and teachers in the development of English projects that will provide natural situations for pupils to use English.

3. To help principals and teachers understand that school subjects should not be taught as ends in themselves, but as means to help pupils adapt themselves intelligently to their social and natural environment.
4. To help teachers realize that the school should be a democratic organization in which all members take an active part, develop a sense of responsibility, acquire the scientific method of thinking, learn to direct their own initiative, practice democratic procedures, learn to work harmoniously with others, learn to act intelligently in life, and develop all those traits which form a well-rounded personality.
5. To guide teachers in using the whole method for teaching reading in the first grade.

Means for carrying out these objectives

1. Classroom visitation intended to:
 - a. Help teachers realize that the acquisition of knowledge in health education, elementary science, and social science is of little value unless, through such knowledge, the child is trained to become a healthy, logical-thinking citizen, prepared to interpret his environment and to solve his life problems efficiently.
 - b. Guide the teacher to understand that the ultimate goal in the teaching of arithmetic is to help the pupils understand the value of numbers and to give them skill in the use of the fundamental operations, so that they may use them in solving life problems.
 - c. Help the teacher realize that, through the teaching of the vernacular language, pupils will learn to express their ideas, emotions, and sentiments; will come in contact with the culture of other Spanish-speaking countries; and will acquire sufficient knowledge to communicate with others.
 - d. Orient teachers so that, through the teaching of music and art, they may provide opportunities for the pupils to express themselves creatively through different media, to satisfy their emotional life, and to learn to appreciate beauty.

- e. Guide the teacher in developing in the pupils a desire for play and recreation which will insure wholesome physical effects in them.
2. Carrying out sectional meetings of teachers and supervisors in order to:
 - a. Make clear the principles involved in the philosophy for the elementary school.
 - b. Make clear the objectives of the elementary school.
 - c. Explain the changes in the curriculum.
3. Preparation and distribution of printed material in order to orient teachers in their work:
 - a. Bulletins on each of the aspects or subjects of the curriculum.
 - b. Circular letters on matters related to the curriculum.
 - c. Sending of sample projects.
 - d. Other informational material for both pupils and teachers.
4. Helping local supervisors and teachers in installing new phases of the curriculum through:
 - a. Local meetings of teachers and principals to discuss specific phases of the new curriculum.
 - b. Organization of local institutes in which teachers will have an opportunity to gain experience in effective procedures for the proper guidance of pupils.
 - c. Individual conferences with local supervisors and teachers, in order to clear up doubts and to offer help in the solution of those problems encountered.
 - d. Proper evaluation of the work being done.
5. Helping local school authorities in obtaining full cooperation from parents and government officials in the proper organization and functioning of the school.

CHECKS

1. Formal and informal tests
2. Observation of pupils' behavior in and out of school
3. Observation of classroom work
4. Observation of teacher and pupil reaction to criticism
5. Evaluation of the relations between the school and the community